

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF DR. STEPHEN GREVIOUS TO THE
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE, MARCH 3, 2023 IN SUPPORT OF
2023 SENATE BILL 1133

My name is Dr. Stephen Grevious and I am a board certified pediatrician with a private practice based in Westport, Connecticut. I am also a Professor of Pediatrics at Quinnipiac University School of Medicine. I reside in Southport, Connecticut. In the past I have also practiced in Norwalk and Wallingford, Connecticut.

As a pediatrician who has been practicing for more than 30 years, I have observed a trend of tightly scheduled child activities where the child seems always to be coming-going to something often with my visit shoehorned. On our questionnaire, on the line for “Activities,” there is rarely space left over after all the teams, clubs, lessons, and playgroups. I have yet to see “just playing” in that space.

In Pediatrics, our mission is to help children maintain health and well-being as they grow to be healthy adults. We do more than treat ear infections, sore throats, rashes, and behavioral issues like potty training. Healthcare involves physical and mental health, both highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the pandemic, the American Academy of Pediatrics noted that only 1 in 4 children participated in the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity daily. During the pandemic, physical activity decreased, play was indoors, and sedentary, more solitary. In addition to the changes in physical health brought on by COVID, there have been changes in mental health from the infection and associated isolation.

Though not the cure for COVID or depression, physical activity has been essential in helping children readjust to normal-ish activities and this pediatrician’s hope of surpassing the 1 in 4 60 minutes in play. The play improves strength and endurance, builds healthy bones and muscles, reduces fat, and develops motor skills and coordination. Play promotes emotional well-being (reduces feelings of depression and anxiety). More specifically, free play, where play is child-directed, not coordinated nor directed by adults, positively affects emotional development.

- Children develop social skills in interactions with other children (not adults)
- They develop problem-solving abilities, taking turns, sharing, negotiating, and following rules (not adults).
- They learn planning: in building, in the progression of games.
- They learn how to handle emotions, building resilience.

Play is good for the body, and free play is great for the mind.

It is for these reasons that I, as a pediatrician and as a citizen of Connecticut, urge you to pass Senate Bill 1133 as it is a positive step that will be appreciated by pediatricians like myself who would like to encourage patients to engage in more free play. It will alleviate some anxiety on the part of parents and move state policy in the direction of supporting children's emotional development and the skills I describe here.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Stephen Grevious M.D.

With input from the Journal of Global Health 2022;12:05003

[HealthyChildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org) (AAP)

WHO#HealthyAtHome-Mental Health

The Atlantic, 10/2011, Esther Gray M.D., Warren Alper School of Medicine